Chapter 3

The pulpit and the pen: clergy, orality and print in the Scottish Gaelic world

Donald E. Meek

THE CLERGY have been of great importance to the creation, maintenance and growth of literacy within the Celtic cultures of Britain and Ireland. This observation applies across the centuries from the early Middle Ages to the period after 1870, when (in Britain) the Education Acts and the consequent nationalizing of educational systems laid the foundations of mass literacy. Even in the twentieth century clergymen have continued to enjoy considerable status in their communities, standing shoulder to shoulder alongside schoolmasters and doctors as the beneficiaries of formal education and its associated literary skills, acquired in their college and university training.

This chapter proposes to examine primarily the role of the Protestant clergy in the Scottish Highlands as practitioners of the written word, especially in relation to the Gaelic language. The extent to which the clergy stood at the boundaries of oral and literary traditions in the Scottish Highlands, as in other parts of Britain and Ireland, is worthy of detailed examination. However, the chapter is no more than a first step in that direction. It will explore the manner in which literate clergymen governed and shaped the Gaelic culture of their time by acting as the bridge-builders between oral and literary traditions, and as arbiters of literary taste and the providers of reading material for newly literate people. It will also reflect on the ways in which the oral and literary traditions, working in different directions, influenced the corresponding products of the clergy, whether in the pulpit or at the writing-desk.

ORALITY AND LITERACY IN THE CELTIC AND GAELIC CONTEXTS

It is a commonly held popular 'myth' that the Celtic areas of Britain and Ireland had little or no access to the written word before *c.* 1870. This interpretation appears to rest partly on an external view of the 'Celtic Fringe' propounded by apologists for anglocentric perspectives of history, although at different stages it has also suited the arguments of Celtic scholars, as well as non-specialists, to stress the outright predominance of oral rather than literary tradition. In fact, the Celtic areas of Britain and Ireland developed a literate dimension in the early Middle Ages, and did so as a result of the arrival of the Christian faith. This does not, however, imply that literacy was widespread; literacy functioned alongside orality, but, in the early Middle Ages, before *c.* 1100, it was restricted to an elite class of scribes and penmen, whose representatives consisted initially of monks and other ecclesiastical personages.¹

From the twelfth century, literacy and the learning that accompanied it were gradually disseminated more widely, and were in effect secularized to a large extent. In Scotland, as in Ireland, literacy was usually to be found within the ecclesiastical sphere, but after 1200 it was evident within the domains of the 'learned orders' of poets, historians, medical men, craftsmen and sculptors, who were sustained by the medieval Gaelic world until *c.* 1600. Acting as the civil servants of their day, these men ensured that the literary needs of the Gaelic upper classes were met, in monument and muniment, on parchment, paper and stone.² We thus need to envisage Celtic cultures which incorporated both literary and oral dimensions across many centuries. These impinged on one another to varying degrees.

THE MEDIEVAL LITERARY TRADITION

The medieval literary activity of the Gaelic world is well attested in Scotland. In broad terms, it extends across a millennium from the foundation of the monastery at Iona in *c.* 563 until the eve of the Reformation. The monastery at Iona recorded annals, transcribed Latin texts, and produced illuminated books of various kinds, including (possibly) the Book of Kells. This literary activity was shared with other monasteries of similar type, some of them founded by Columba, in Ireland.³ Although the record is by no means complete, the work of the monastic scribes associated with early Gaelic churches appears to have been sustained in Scotland until the twelfth century. It appears saliently in a pocket gospel-book, associated with the monastery of Old Deer in Buchan, Aberdeenshire, in the early years of that century.

The north-eastern provenance of the manuscript is worth noting. While it is by no means clear that the book itself was compiled at Deer, it contains in its margins six deeds which were written in Gaelic and are closely linked to the area. These relate to the granting of land to the monastery: they define the extent of the land granted to the monastery by noblemen, and confirm the privileges (from dues and exactions) enjoyed by it. The recording of the deeds of grant and privilege in the margins of a gospel-book of this kind demonstrates at once the importance of these deeds in the eyes of the monks at Old Deer, and also the significance of the gospel-book itself, which was deemed a fit repository for such important records. Although it is common to refer to the language of the deeds as Middle Irish, they are in fact in Middle Gaelic, the language shared by both Ireland and Scotland in this period. The Deer entries do, however, contain evidence of the emergence by that date of linguistic features that are distinctively Scottish, and for this valuable glimpse of the developing language we are deeply indebted to the scribes at Old Deer. The recording of these features demonstrates the overlapping of orality and literacy, since they are inherently phonological and thus part of the spoken language, but they are preserved for us in a manuscript.⁴

A much more expansive view of the Gaelic world of the later Middle Ages, embracing the Classical Gaelic poetry of Ireland and Scotland, is provided four centuries later by a manuscript compiled by clergy associated with Fortingall in Perthshire and Lismore in Argyllshire. James MacGregor, titular dean of Lismore, and his brother Duncan, natives of Fortingall, appear to have been the principal scribes involved in the compilation of the Book of the Dean of Lismore. This major collection of Gaelic verse extends, in effect, across the single Gaelic literary province formed by the Gaelic regions of Scotland and Ireland, extending geographically from Perthshire in the east to County Clare in the west, and from Lewis in the north to the Shannon in the south. The northern mainland of Scotland is not represented, nor (curiously) is the north of Ireland to any great extent. Beyond the Hebrides and the southern Highland mainland, the western side of Ireland, from Connacht southwards, is the source of the largest proportion of surviving poems. The book appears to owe much of its sparkle and energy to the impetus provided by Campbell patronage of the MacGregors after the downfall of the Lordship of the Isles (c. 1200–1493). It is, however, difficult to know whether the MacGregors had a particular purpose in compiling their manuscript. The mixture of genres within the manuscript – from stray sayings and chronicles to shopping lists – gives the impression that it may have been a fairly casual compilation, and it would be unwise to read too much into the work in its surviving format; but it is legitimate to wonder whether it may have been at least a first draft of an ambitious project to capture some of the finest verse products of the medieval Gaelic world, from western Scotland to western Ireland. Some of the oldest poems in the book can be dated to the thirteenth

and early fourteenth centuries, while the latest were composed close to the time of compilation of the book itself. The range of verse – formal bardic verse to patrons of the poets, ballads about the heroes of the Fianna, religious poetry of very high quality, and occasional poems on various themes, including courtly love – is impressive, as is the overall standard of the poetry.⁵

The Book of the Dean of Lismore has some well-known peculiarities. The most notorious is the spelling system which the scribes, based in their Fortingall scriptorium, close to the frontier with the Lowlands, consistently applied to their texts. This spelling system is based on the conventions of Middle and Early Modern Scots, and not on the standard conventions of Gaelic tradition. Elsewhere, it has been argued that Gaelic scribes in Scotland had two spelling systems to choose from, the one represented in the Book of the Dean of Lismore and the other in the many Gaelic manuscripts compiled by scribes operating in the Gaelic heartlands of Ireland and Scotland, where Scots and English spelling conventions were less pervasive.⁶

The second peculiarity of the Book of the Dean of Lismore – on this occasion one which is more warmly welcomed by Gaelic scholars – is the extent to which its scribes have represented dialectal features of Early Modern Scottish Gaelic in their transcriptions. From time to time – though not by any means consistently – they depart from the strict grammatical conventions of the Classical Gaelic tradition which would have been used by the trained poets and prose writers of both Ireland and Scotland. They allow aspects of the language as spoken to determine the shape of their words, and this provides another major vantage point for viewing the development of distinctively Scottish forms of Gaelic. It is not clear whether the scribes themselves are solely responsible for this practice; it seems likely that they obtained at least some texts in which linguistic weathering of this kind was already evident, and it is, of course, likely that they added their own Perthshire peculiarities to the material as they transcribed it. The material in the Book of the Dean of Lismore is thus linguistically complex and multi-layered, representing the fusion of different orthographic, morphological and grammatical conventions.⁷

One of the many questions raised by this perplexing Gaelic manuscript is the extent to which it is based on oral or literary sources. When it was first examined in some detail by scholars in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was generally claimed that the scribes had obtained their material from oral sources. More recent scholars have been much more cautious, and, while arguing for the influence of oral conventions at various levels, have been inclined to consider the possibility that the MacGregor scribes at Fortingall were, in the main, likely to have had access to manuscript versions of their poems. This makes it easier to understand how the scribes could have set about the detailed emendation which appears in certain poems in the manuscript. Their principles of emendation and concern for altering their

texts, so as to provide what was a 'correct' text in their eyes, may also be indicative of humanist influence in the southern and eastern areas of the Highlands on the eve of the Reformation.⁸

The Book of the Dean of Lismore is important not only as a window on Gaelic literary tradition in the period from 1200 to 1500; it is also a sobering reminder of what might have happened to the spelling conventions of Scottish Gaelic if the MacGregor scribes of Fortingall had been the first to harness print for the purposes of publishing Gaelic texts. The power of the clergy, particularly through major religious texts, to determine the spelling used by minority languages is demonstrated in the case of Manx, a form of eastern Gaelic closely related to Scottish Gaelic. The application of a spelling system based on that of Early Modern English is evident in Bishop Phillips' Manx translation of the *Book of Common Prayer*, undertaken between 1605 and 1610, but not actually printed though preserved in manuscript. The first Manx printed book, a bilingual version of Bishop Thomas Wilson (of Man)'s *Principles and Duties of Christianity*, published in the early eighteenth century, was similarly in an English-based non-Gaelic spelling, and ensured that non-Gaelic orthographic conventions would be the norm for the Manx language thereafter.⁹ The Manx clergy, employing variations of this kind of spelling system, translated the Bible into Manx, and also a range of significant religious texts (e.g. Paul Crebbin's translation of John Rawlet's *Christian Monitor* of 1686, known in Manx as *Yn Fer-raauee Creestee*, and published in 1763¹⁰). This set Manx apart from other forms of Gaelic – Scottish Gaelic and Irish – and made it (in T. F. O'Rahilly's phrase) 'that Cinderella of Gaelic tongues'.¹¹ A similar fate might have befallen Scottish Gaelic, if the first printed book had turned its back on Classical Gaelic spelling conventions. In the event, the first printed book in Gaelic – including Irish and Scottish Gaelic – appeared in 1567. It was the work of John Carswell, a Reformation clergyman who was deeply imbued with the classical conventions of the Gaelic world, and who transferred the practices of the Gaelic scribes to the new world of print.

GAELIC AND THE REFORMATION

John Carswell's book was a translation of *The Book of Common Order*, the directory of the Reformed Church in Scotland. The BCO had been authorized in Scotland in 1563, and the appearance of Carswell's translation, no more than four years later, was a remarkable achievement. Protestant doctrine was thereby given validation in the language of the Gaelic west. It is important to note the kind of Gaelic used by Carswell: it was not the Gaelic language as spoken by the 'ordinary' Gaels of Scotland, but the Classical Gaelic literary language, employed by the literate classes of both Ireland and Scotland. For

John Carswell, this was not only a natural choice, it also ensured that the book would have the best possible opportunity to circulate among influential members of the learned class in Ireland and Scotland. Pre-Reformation clergymen who, like Carswell himself, had accepted benefices in the reformed Church would have inherited much of the Classical Gaelic literary tradition, including literacy in the classical *lingua franca*. Carswell himself was apparently trained at a Gaelic bardic school, where diction and writing according to the old classical standards would have been inculcated, but he had also received a university education at St Andrews. In this way, his education reflects a fusion of Lowland and Gaelic culture, a fusion which is likewise at the heart of his book, in that it contains doctrines that first entered the Lowlands, and would have been unknown to most Gaels, although they were couched in a language which they would have recognized readily.¹²

Of course, most Gaels in Ireland and Scotland would have been unable to read Carswell's book. To cross this barrier, it would have been expected that the ministers would read and declaim the relevant sections of the book to their congregations. Carswell's style is, in fact, made for oral recitation and ready memorization in an oral context. He uses earlier stylistic devices, such as alliteration, in some profusion and to good effect. He also provides a catechism which is largely his own composition, and which lends itself to dramatic rendition. The aim of the catechism is to demonstrate the unacceptability of earlier Catholic practices. This is achieved by means of two speakers, the one an interrogator and the other a novice in the Protestant faith. The novice, however, is seen to be much more knowledgeable than the teacher. Carswell's catechism, while employing formal Classical Gaelic at the literary level, contains distinct cadences of spoken Scottish Gaelic.¹³

Carswell adds further material to the original *Book of Common Order*, notably his Dedicatory Epistle to his patron, the fifth earl of Argyll, his Epistle to the Reader, and his final Lawful Apology. These are key chapters which seek to accommodate the book to Gaelic conventions, but they also make a brave attempt to pull traditional Gaelic scribes into the new world of the printed book, by pointing out the speed with which the latter can be produced. In his Epistle to the Reader, Carswell challenges the old scribes to re-order their priorities by moving from manuscript to print, thus saving themselves time and effort. He also makes it clear that he would prefer them to move away from the 'mendacity' encapsulated in traditional tales to the 'truth' which the Reformation and the Bible have brought to the Gaelic world.¹⁴

The post-Reformation literary activity of Gaelic Scotland, then, did not come out of the blue. It had its roots in much earlier medieval scribal activity and in a stable set of Gaelic literary conventions. These were applied to a new cause, and provided a bridge between the old world and the new. The Reformation, as perceived in its Gaelic guise by John Carswell, was not intended to cause division in either cultural or religious terms. Although it

did not unite Ireland and Gaelic Scotland, it did have the effect of creating a particular linguistic style for Scottish Gaelic Protestantism. On the other hand, Carswell's book also challenged traditional perspectives by going to the heart of the domain of the scribes who wrote secular poems and tales laboriously in manuscript. The advance of information technology, then as now, was a challenge to established patterns. Since they lacked the motivation of Protestant apologists who were alive to the power of the press, secular Gaelic scribes did not make an early and effective transition to print as Carswell recommended, and the Gaelic world was much the poorer.¹⁵

Despite the conservatism of the secular scribes, Carswell's cultural brokering had far-reaching implications for the future of Gaelic. It is fair to state that, since the Reformation, the Protestant Church has acknowledged the importance of Gaelic as a medium for its ministry, and that it has used the language fairly consistently as a medium for the Christian message proclaimed from its pulpits. There have been times when the commitment of the Church to Gaelic has faltered. This has happened largely because the language is often perceived as no more than a route to gain access to the minds and souls of Highlanders. Despite such a utilitarian view of Gaelic, the Church of Scotland has acknowledged the importance of the language, and throughout the centuries it has tried to preserve a Gaelic ministry in its Highland charges. All other Protestant churches and denominations active in the Highlands have employed Gaelic preachers – the Episcopal Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Presbyterian Church, and also the smaller nonconformist bodies, such as Baptists and Independents (also known as Congregationalists).¹⁶

Since 1560 the Protestant churches have been the main users of Gaelic as a preaching medium, but the Roman Catholic Church has likewise employed Gaelic in its services in the Highlands and Islands, and continues to do so. Since the Second Vatican Council, it has made much more extensive use of Gaelic in preaching and worship. The diocese of Argyll and the Isles has a small but well-sustained body of Gaelic-speaking priests who serve charges in the islands of Barra, South Uist and Eriskay, and on the western edge of the Highland mainland. The Gaelic priests of the Highlands and Islands are usually natives of the islands that they serve, and are very close to the everyday lives of their people and their communities. Their preaching is immediately recognizable to the Protestant Gaelic ear, not only by its different doctrinal emphases, but also by its register and diction. Put simply, Roman Catholic preaching style is generally closer to ordinary spoken Gaelic than is Protestant preaching.¹⁷

Protestant preachers use a more elevated style of Gaelic, based on the Classical Gaelic dialect which the Protestant Church inherited from the Middle Ages. This may seem slightly paradoxical, but it is, in fact, the case that Protestants have been much more wedded to upper register than Catholics.

When the old order of scribes declined after 1600, along with the conventions of Classical Gaelic, the Protestant Church became, by default, the principal custodian of the type of Gaelic closest to that of the medieval world. Classical style and diction were transferred to Protestant religious books, thus setting them apart from secular books, but, as Gaelic literacy spread, a gradual adjustment towards vernacular practice had to take place. The classical features of 'Protestant Gaelic' were thus modified by allowing more of the vernacular language into religious texts. The decline of the classical tradition meant that the style of 'Protestant Gaelic' was liable to be influenced not only by the vernacular, but also by external models, particularly since translation from English to Gaelic was at the heart of the Protestant educational programme. Ministers were among the most influential translators of key religious books, including catechisms and Puritan works, though they were aided increasingly after 1800 by Gaelic schoolmasters.¹⁸

CATECHISMS AND PURITAN TEXTS

Carswell's translation of the *Book of Common Order* preceded the provision of a specifically Scottish Gaelic Bible. The primary concern of the reformed church in the Highlands before 1650 was to lay a firm doctrinal foundation. This is evident in the priority given to the translation of Gaelic catechisms. Dating from 1631, the catechisms were a most important bridge between the laity and the Protestant Church. Consequently, language level required to be pitched as close as possible to spoken, oral Gaelic, while retaining essential technical terms. The catechisms, beginning in a strongly classical mode, do show a gradual 'lowering' of linguistic level as the years pass. Adjustments had to be made to language and style to ensure that basic Christian doctrine could be assimilated easily within the wider community. Assimilation certainly occurred. The *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, translated by the Synod of Argyll and first published c. 1653, had reached a second edition by 1659. It was reprinted almost thirty times in the course of the eighteenth century, and, in a suitably vernacular style, it became part of the oral culture of the Highlands and Islands.¹⁹ Recited and quoted as required, it may have compensated to some extent for the lack of liturgy and litany in the reformed context.

From the middle of the eighteenth century, the catechisms were supplemented by a steady stream of translations of Puritan works into Gaelic, beginning with Richard Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* in 1750, which was translated by the Rev. Alexander MacFarlane of Arrochar (who was later asked to undertake the translation of the New Testament into Gaelic, but was unable to do so). As translation developed, Gaelic religious texts lost some of their Classical Gaelic flavour, but moved closer to the style of their

English Puritan exemplars, thus creating a hybrid ‘Puritan–Westminster Gaelic’, with tight articulation and long sentences which were not always easy to read or absorb. The opening sentence of MacFarlane’s translation, in which the author (Richard Baxter) explains the purpose his work, will give the flavour of the whole:

Anns an eolas ghoirid a bha agam air seirbhiseach urramach agus foghlumta Chriosd, Easpuig Usher, bu tric leis, o àm gu h-àm bhi ’g am bhrosnachadh, chum riaghailt sdùiridh a sgriobhadh, do gach inbh fa leth, do luchd-aidmheil a chreidimh Chriosduidh, a shonraicheadh amach do gach neach a chuibhrionn fein; a’ toiseachadh leis na daoineibh neo-iompaicht’ agus a’ gabhail air m’ aghaidh cum nan leanaba ann an Criosd, agus ’na dhiaigh sin, chum nan daoine neart-mhor, a’ coi-measgadh cuideachaidh shonraicht an aghaidh gach peacaidh fa leth, air am bheil iad teomadh.²⁰

(In the brief acquaintance that I had with that honourable and learned servant of Christ, Bishop Ussher, it was his frequent practice on different occasions to exhort me to write a guide, for each level individually, for the professors of the Christian faith, which would set out for each person his own portion; beginning with the unconverted people and keeping on my way to the babes in Christ, and after that, to the strong people, intermingling specific help against each individual sin, to which they are prone.)

Gaelic translation of this kind reached a high point in the nineteenth century. Perhaps the most ambitious of all Puritan translations into Gaelic was John Owen’s treatise *On Communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, published in 1876.²¹ This was undertaken by a schoolmaster, Alexander MacDougall of Glen Urquhart. Of the man and his work, Professor Donald MacLean has written as follows:

Among the translators of English prose, none has laboured with more painstaking industry than Alexander Macdougall of Glenurquhart. In the upper reaches of that Strath this teacher spent his evenings, summer and winter alike, in translating the works of Dr John Owen. The translations are as severely accurate and unbending as the theology of the famous Puritan.²²

As MacLean suggests, such translations tended to sacrifice lively, vernacular Gaelic to doctrinal precision and stylistic imitation. Some concession to the idiom of vernacular Gaelic would certainly have brightened their appeal, at least to modern minds. In fairness, however, it requires to be noted that theological works were technical treatises, the laboured efforts of the study rather than the spontaneous outputs of the pulpit, and it is only to be expected that, like present-day translators of important scientific textbooks, the Gaelicizers of Puritan works would have afforded a high priority to semantic precision. A sample of MacDougall’s translation of Owen – a single

sentence in all – will be sufficient to indicate the tenor of the work as a whole:

Air an stéidh so, ma seadh, ged a thigeadh an saoghal gu léir air aghaidh – ma dh'fheudas sinn labhairt mar sin – a dh'òl suas tròcair, saoir ghràis agus maitheanas pheacanna, a' tarruing uisge gun tàmh à tobraichibh na slàinte, – seadh, ged a luidheadh iad uile a stigh ri aon ghealladh agus aingeal o nèamh a' brosnachadh suas an ìotaidh, ag ràdh, 'Olaibh, a chàirdean, seadh, òlaibh, gu pailt, tàirnibh gu saoiibhi[r] gràs agus maitheanas peacaidh na dh' fhòghnas airson an tobair aingidheachd a th' ann an uchd gach aoin dibh;' – cha bhitheadh e comasach dhoibh doimhne ro phailt a ghràis a th' anns a' ghealladh sin a lughdachadh anns an tomhas as lugha.²³

(On this foundation, therefore, if the whole world should come forward – if we may speak like that – to drink up mercy, free grace and forgiveness of sins, drawing water ceaselessly from the wells of salvation, – yea, though they should all adhere to the one promise and though an angel from heaven should exacerbate their thirst, saying, 'Drink, my friends, yea, drink plentifully, draw richly as much grace and forgiveness of sin as will suffice for the well of wickedness that there is in the breast of each one of you'; – it would not be possible for you to diminish in the smallest measure the exceeding plenty of the grace that there is in that promise.)

Printed translations of Puritan treatises, heavy with imported doctrine, were thus influencing Gaelic style in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet 'Puritan Gaelic' was by no means uniform. Even when the subject matter was sober, it was possible to reproduce it in a lively style, especially if the original work had a strong element of narrative. This is evident in the case of John Bunyan's celebrated *Pilgrim's Progress*, which was translated into Gaelic in 1812. The fluency of the translation was such that it entered into oral narrative as the shared spiritual biography of the Gaelic people, and Bunyan himself was often regarded as if he were a native Gael.²⁴ The translator of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Patrick MacFarlane (1758–1832), was a schoolmaster in Appin, who also produced fluent Gaelic texts of works by Philip Doddridge and William Guthrie.²⁵ Much therefore depended on the skills of the translator and the nature of the original text. Some further stylistic variety was achieved when the whole Bible became available in Gaelic in 1801. Naturalization of Gaelic religious writing was facilitated thereafter not only through the pulpit, but also through the creation of Gaelic Schools Societies which operated in the Highlands and Hebrides from 1811, and taught the people to read the standard Scottish Gaelic Bible.²⁶

TRANSLATING THE BIBLE

The translation of the Bible into Scottish Gaelic was long delayed. As early as 1567, John Carswell recognized the need for a printed Gaelic Bible, but Gaels in Scotland were to wait for more than two centuries before a complete Scottish Gaelic Bible was produced. The first Gaelic Bibles were translated in Ireland, and were the product of the Classical tradition of both Ireland and Gaelic Scotland – the same tradition as that which had shaped Carswell's translation of the *Book of Common Order*. The Classical Gaelic version of the New Testament, completed by William Ó Domhnaill, was published in 1602–3. The corresponding version of the Old Testament, translated by William Bedell, Bishop of Kilmore, with the assistance of Gaelic scribes of the traditional kind, was completed c. 1640, but not published until 1685.²⁷ In the mid-seventeenth century the Synod of Argyll tried unsuccessfully to undertake a translation of the Old Testament into Gaelic; the project appears to have perished because of the political and ecclesiastical instabilities of the time.²⁸ Copies of the two Classical Gaelic Testaments were sent to Scotland, and distributed to a number of churches in the Gaelic-speaking areas. These early volumes employed the scribal conventions of the Classical period, and also a type-face based on Gaelic script. Consequently, Scottish clergy, who had generally lost their familiarity with the Classical tradition by the later seventeenth century, had difficulty in reading the texts. In an attempt to achieve a working compromise, Robert Kirk, the Episcopalian minister of Aberfoyle, converted the Classical texts into Roman type and expanded the scribal conventions. By so doing, he produced a pocket Bible which was published in London in 1690. It was widely used in the Highlands, but, despite Kirk's adaptation, it was not a distinctively Scottish text.²⁹

The translation of the Bible into Scottish Gaelic was achieved in two stages – the New Testament was completed in 1767 and the Old in 1801. The translations were sponsored by the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SSPCK), a body which began to establish schools in the Highlands in 1709. The SSPCK initially aimed to eradicate Gaelic by teaching English in its schools, but by the mid-eighteenth century it had changed its tactics, and by 1755 it was making plans to translate the Bible into Scottish Gaelic. It arranged for the translation and ultimate publication of the Gaelic New Testament in 1767. Though the SSPCK tried initially to enlist the services of Alexander MacFarlane, minister of Arrochar, the translation of the New Testament was eventually entrusted to the minister of Killin, James Stuart. His son John, minister of Luss, was closely involved in the production of the Old Testament. The Old Testament was translated in portions.³⁰

The styles of the two Scottish Testaments were surprisingly different. Both were unquestionably indebted to the Classical language and style of the earlier versions, but they were nevertheless Scottish Gaelic in terms of their syntax and morphology. However, the New Testament was noticeably stricter in its verbal relationship to the underlying Greek text, conceding little to natural Gaelic idiom, particularly in the Epistles, while the Old Testament, after some fairly radical adjustment of certain sections, achieved a more natural stylistic flow. The narrative style of much of the Old Testament eased the translators' work. The Gaelic Bible as a whole employed a lean and sinuous style which, while reflecting the natural variations in different types of Greek and Hebrew prose, was very different from the convoluted structures of earlier Puritan translations.³¹ Indeed, it could be said that, among its many beneficial effects, the Gaelic Bible, and especially the Gaelic Old Testament, helped to steer Gaelic writing away from the repressive corsetry of catechisms and doctrinal treatises. 'Westminster Gaelic', however politically and doctrinally correct, was challenged and displaced as the pre-eminent register of Gaelic prose. The Goliath of stylistic philistinism – and Puritanism – was neatly slain by the David of the vernacular Gaelic world, as the description of Goliath indicates (1 Samuel 17:4–7):

4. Agus thàinig curaidh a mach a camp nam Philisteach d'am b' ainm Goliath o Ghat, anns an robh sè làmhnan-coille agus rèis air àirde.

5. Agus bha clogaid umha air a cheann, agus bha e air èideadh le lùirich mhàilich: agus b'e cothrom na lùiriche cùig mìle secel umha.

6. Agus bha coisbheirt umha air a chosaibh, agus targaid umha eadar a ghuaillibh.

7. Agus bha crann a shleagha mar gharmain figheadair, agus bha ann an ceann a shleagha sè ceud secel iarunn; agus bha fear a' giùlan sgéithe ag imeachd roimhe.³²

(4. And a warrior came out of the camp of the Philistines, who was called Goliath from Gath, who measured six cubits and a span in height.

5. And there was a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was attired with a mail breastplate; and the weight of the breastplate was five thousand shekels of bronze.

6. And there were bronze shoes on his feet, and a shield of bronze between his shoulders.

7. And the shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and there were six hundred shekels of iron in the head of his spear; and a man carrying a shield walked before him.)

Such concise depiction stands in sharp contrast not only to the long sentences of Puritan works, but also to Gaelic literary conventions for the

description of warriors. Yet this stylistic victory was not immediate or total. The new text was not readily accepted by everyone. It ran into dialectal difficulties, and for a while there were rumours of competing versions, ready for publication. It also had to displace a range of 'substitutes' which had appeared in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and continued well into the nineteenth. What were in effect oral Bibles had been made available, in whole or in part, across the centuries, and were deeply etched in people's memories. Some of these were adaptations made by ministers, employing either the English Authorized Version of 1611 or the Classical Gaelic Testaments as their basic texts. Ministers and parishioners often preferred the improvised translations to which they had grown accustomed.³³

FROM PULPIT TO PRINT

Despite initial antipathy, the gradual availability of a Scottish Gaelic Bible gave a boost to Gaelic preaching. The provision of the full Scottish Gaelic Bible helped to create a more literate ministry, and also a broader readership. The influence of Bible-based literacy, reflecting the gradual use and absorption of the new translations, probably stimulated the appearance of printed Gaelic sermons. The transferring of the preached word to the printed text had a significantly liberating effect on Gaelic prose.

Social change, and particularly migration and emigration, were among the initial factors in transferring the oral word to the printed page. Gaelic preaching was heard not only in Highland pulpits; it also found a place in Lowland pulpits, notably the pulpits of the Gaelic chapels which were built in Scotland's cities from the late eighteenth century in order to provide spiritual nourishment for the many Highlanders who found their way to the cities for employment. In Aberdeen, for instance, a Gaelic congregation was established in 1785, largely for the benefit of Highlanders who came to work in the granite quarries in Rubislaw. The chapel which the congregation later erected, and which was located for a number of years in Gaelic Lane (where the old building can still be seen), was a focal point of Gaelic activity. Pre-eminently it provided a platform for Gaelic preachers, among them some distinguished graduates of King's College and Marischal College.³⁴

Highlanders, of course, went farther afield than the Lowlands and the eastern fringes of Scotland; they emigrated in substantial numbers from the early years of the eighteenth century, and sometimes took their preachers with them. Much more frequently, however, they had to search for new preachers.³⁵ Preaching had a very important place in the migrant and emigrant context, and it was there that the earliest attempts were made to

print Gaelic sermons. The emigrant experience hastened the transition from orality to print, since Gaelic ministers in the new colonies were in very short supply, and the availability of printed sermons helped to distribute the Christian message more widely among emigrants, who lacked easy access to the means of grace. Literate laymen could read the printed sermons to groups assembled in homes, and the press could act to some extent as a substitute for the missing preacher.

It is therefore not entirely surprising that the first Gaelic sermons to have survived in print were published far from the Highlands, by Sibley, Howard and Roulstone in Fayetteville (formerly Cross Creek), North Carolina, in 1791.³⁶ Both were preached in the Raft Swamp district of North Carolina, inland from Cape Fear, in 'the first month of autumn 1790' by the Rev. Dougal Crawford (1752–1821), a native of Arran, who had arrived in the area about 1784.³⁷ His congregations would have consisted of a large number of his Highland compatriots, who had been creating, since the mid-1730s, a substantial Gaelic colony in that part of what is now the USA.³⁸ No fewer than three prayers were also included in the book, one preceding the first sermon, and two preceding the second. This in itself makes a significant point. The book was evidently intended to provide a set of useful materials for both private devotion and (when necessary) public worship. In addition, it was apparently expected that the book would be read in both Arran and North Carolina. The prefaces to the sermons are dedicated respectively to Crawford's home congregation in the parish of Kilmorie in Arran,³⁹ and to 'the congregation in Raft Swamp and the congregations in Robeson County and in Mr MacKay's place'⁴⁰ – possibly a reference to the congregation of an Argyllshire man, Archibald MacKay, who became an elder in the Longstreet church, Cumberland County.⁴¹

The themes of the Raft Swamp sermons appear to have been chosen with particular relevance to the context of the emigrant communities. In the absence of a plentiful supply of ministers, parents had a particularly onerous responsibility for the correct instruction of the young. The first sermon is therefore on Proverbs 22:6, 'Tog suas an leanabh ann san tslighe ann san coir dha gluasachd, 'nuair a bhios e og; & 'nuair a thig e gu haois, cha treig e i' (Bring up the child in the way he should go, when he is young; and when he comes of age, he will not forsake it).⁴² The second sermon drew its theme from Micah 2: 10: 'Eiribh agus imichibh, oir cha 'ne so bhur tamh' (Arise, and go, for this is not your rest) – a text which must have had considerable poignancy in the emigrant context, particularly for second-generation emigrants who had become settled in their ways.⁴³ Crawford, in fact, warns his hearers of the dangers of settled living, and particularly those which come in the wake of prosperity. People must remember that they have to face death. Crawford majored on the need to forsake the things of this world. This was to become one of the keynotes of Highland evangelical

preaching during the next century. In the following extract, the preacher's point is made by a cumulative listing of those things which perish, and the rhetoric, which represents that of the typical Gaelic preacher in its pulse and rhythms, culminates by laying emphasis on the enduring qualities of Godly virtue:

Criochnachui' onoir agus urram, basaichi maise agus gach dealbh is fionalta a chuaidh riamh a sgeudacha le feòil, falbhaidh beartas as an tsealladh le sgiatha grad, imichidh foghlum agus gliocas air falbh, agus dichuinichear gach ni a chuireas a bheatha so fa chomhair 'ar suilean; ach mairidh subhailce gu siorruidh, se onoir amhain beatha agus sonas gach ni tha iomlan, mor, agus maith.⁴⁴

(Honour and privilege will perish, beauty and every finest image which was ever bedecked by the flesh will die, wealth will vanish from sight with swift wings, knowledge and wisdom will depart, and everything that this life puts before our eyes will be forgotten; but virtue will last forever – honour consists solely in the life and joy of every thing that is perfect, great and good.)

The preaching verses for both sermons are slightly different from their forms in portions of the Gaelic Old Testament which were published in 1786–87. Crawford's version of Proverbs 22:6 employs *gluasachd* for *imeachd*, and adds the clause '*nuair a bhios e og*, while Micah 2:10 employs *tàmh* for *còmhnuidh* (dwelling). This may point to some degree of fluidity in the Gaelic Bible versions (between printed and oral forms, with concessions to dialect) which were available to Gaels before the 'official' version of the Old Testament was finalized and accepted after 1807.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Crawford was evidently skilled in writing Gaelic, and his printers were apparently no less familiar with the language. Although the punctuation is unusual at times, the grammar, syntax and orthography of each sermon show a high degree of consistency, and relatively few misprints.⁴⁶ The important place given to preaching as part of late eighteenth-century worship is underlined by both Raft Swamp sermons, each of which comprises some sixteen pages of tightly packed print, and (if we can discount the possibility that Crawford may have expanded his work for publication) each must have taken at least an hour-and-a-half to deliver.⁴⁷ The prayers, which reproduce in print the normal phrasing and rhythms of public prayer in Gaelic, range from one to two pages in length.⁴⁸ By declaiming this remarkable set of Presbyterian sermons and prayers from the *Gàidhealtachd* of North Carolina, it is still possible to 'hear' the voice of the preacher as he addresses his various congregations far from his native Gaelic community.

By 1795 Crawford had returned to Arran, and was assistant at Kilmorie. In that year he published another homiletic text, this time addressed to women, and published by James Gillies of Glasgow.⁴⁹ The target readership/audience for Crawford's second publication suggests that the motivation to

print Gaelic homiletic material in Scotland was a concern for those seen to be 'at risk' and in need of spiritual strengthening, because of their age, role, profession or location. Children came within this category, and were offered a Gaelic translation of Isaac Watts's *Sermon to Young People* (1795).⁵⁰ Highland soldiers in the British regiments were likewise targeted in a sermon by the Rev. Thomas Broughton, which was translated and published in 1797 as a small booklet with an extensive preface. The sermon was specifically composed for soldiers, and entitled in Gaelic *An Saighdear Criosduidh no na dleasdnais iomchuidh chaum beatha dhiadhaidh chaithe, air an sparradh air an armaillt: o eisempleir Chornelius* (The Christian Soldier, or the duties appropriate to living a Christian life, urged upon the army: from the example of Cornelius).⁵¹ This theme, which combined Christian values with a military profession, reflected the revamping of the old warrior ideal, once central to Gaelic society, in response to both Christian morality and British expansionism. The preface to the translated work was composed in Gaelic by the unidentified translator, and makes no bones about what is expected of the soldiers who read or hear the sermon:

B' ard cliu nan gaidheal, na 'n linne fa leath, air sinnsearan, airson mor-mhisneach, chum onoir na 'n Rìgh, agus na 'n duthaich dhionadh tearainte. Tha duil agam nach toir an sliochd mi-chliu orra le caochladh cleachdain.⁵²

(The Gaels had a high reputation, in another generation, our ancestors, for great courage, to honour the king, and to defend their country securely. I hope that their descendants will not bring disrepute upon them with a different practice.)

Religious literature in Gaelic, both poetry and prose, stood not only on the frontier between orality and print, but also on the frontier between external British supremacy and the civilizing of an allegedly barbarous people by redirecting their lives into other, more constructive, avenues. The goal of 'improving' the Gaels – spiritually, politically, morally and socially – was never far from the minds of writers of Gaelic prose in the eighteenth and (especially) the nineteenth centuries.

As key people in bringing spiritual improvement to the Highlands, divinity students and budding Gaelic preachers were a group whose needs were recognized, and this encouraged the printing of sermons. A collection of the sermons of the Rev. Ewen MacDiarmid was published in 1804, with new preachers directly in view.⁵³ MacDiarmid was, for a period, the minister of Glasgow Gaelic Chapel. He was also an important collector of Gaelic songs and lore.⁵⁴ Although MacDiarmid has been regarded as a moderate because of his contribution to the collecting of Gaelic folklore, his theological sympathies appear to have lain with evangelicals. The sermons published posthumously under his name are certainly warmly evangelical, though Professor Donald MacLean claims that 'MacDiarmid's sermons are understood

to be translations from a Scottish divine'.⁵⁵ His book was well used, nevertheless; copies crossed the Atlantic with emigrant Highlanders, and those in Scotland sometimes show evidence that they were indeed employed as models by preachers, who pored over their texts and annotated their vocabulary in the margins.⁵⁶ In this way, the printed text aided the maintenance of an oral art, and doubtless influenced its direction.

Whatever their source, MacDiarmid's sermons are stylistically very different from the stiff formality of Broughton and of Puritan translations. Sentences are shorter, and the more natural phrasing and cadences of the vernacular Gaelic pulpit are very evident. This is illustrated by the opening of MacDiarmid's sermon on Hebrews 4: 16, a verse which is rendered in the 1767 Gaelic New Testament and in MacDiarmid's heading as 'Thigemaide uime sin le danachd gu righ-chaithir nan gras, chum gu faigh sinn trocair, agus gu 'n amais sinn air gras chum cobhair ann an am feuma' ('Let us therefore come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and attain grace to help in time of need'):

'S iomadh cuireadh càirdeil, agus earrail dhian, a tha Dia 'na fhreasdal, agus gu h-àraidh 'na fhocal a' toirt dhuinn teachd gun dàil 'na ionnsuidh fein. Cuireadh is cairdeile, agus comhairle is fhearr, cha d' fhuair sinn riamh, agus cha 'n fhuigh gu brath air talamh no am briathraibh steidh mo theagaisg. Am bheil cuireadh chum biadh a ghabhail, a' toirt sòlas do 'n duine ocrach; am bheil chum deoch fhaotainn do'n neach a tha paiteach; am bheil chum fois a mhealtuinn, do 'n dream a tha sgith; am bheil chum slainte a shealbhachadh dhoibh-sin a tha tinn; 's muga gu mòr an sòlas is còir dha a thoirt dhuinne, gu bheil sinn a' faotain cuireadh teachd an ionnsuidh Dhe, chum 's gu 'm fuigh sinn tròcair agus gràs uaithe. Tròcair fhaotainn, 'se so ar saorsa o dhiteadh; gràs fhaotainn, 'se so ar naomhachadh air talamh, agus ar n' ullachadh fa chomhair neamh.⁵⁷

(There is many a friendly invitation, and ardent entreaty, that God in his providence, and especially in his word[,] gives us that we may come without delay to himself. A more friendly invitation, and better advice, we never received, and we will never get on earth[,] than in the words on which my exposition is founded. Does an invitation to take food give joy to a hungry man; to receive drink to the one who is thirsty; to enjoy rest to the one who is weary; to gain healing to those who are ill[?]; so much greater is the joy that it ought to give us, that we are receiving an invitation to come to God, in order that we may receive mercy and grace from him. To receive mercy, this is our freedom from condemnation; to receive grace, this is our sanctification on earth, and our preparation with a view to heaven.)

Despite MacDiarmid's volume, publication of sermons originally composed in Gaelic was not evident to any significant extent before 1830, and even after 1900 printed output was sluggish. The flow was stimulated initially by the Gaelic journals of the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod (see below), and there

was a clear connection between the growth of literacy, particularly through the Gaelic Schools Societies, and the provision of texts in an idiomatic form closer to that used by the people themselves.

The twentieth century witnessed the publication of a somewhat greater number of collections and anthologies of Gaelic sermons, among them Malcolm MacLeod's *An Iuchair Oir* (1950),⁵⁸ and *Dòrlach Sil* (1931), edited by that exacting Free Church commentator, Professor Donald MacLean. In his Introduction, MacLean offers his views on why there had been such a dearth of printed Gaelic sermons hitherto:

Ann an Litreachas Gàidhlig a tha ann an clò chan fhaighear ach glè bheag de shearmoinean. Chan e nach robh na Gaidheil ag cur meas agus miadh air searmoinean, oir bha, mar a tha iad a' deanamh sin fhathast, ach cha robh a h-uile ministear ainmeil a bha aca cho ealamh ann an sgrìobhadh na Gàidhlig ri an gihbht-labhairt innte. Air chùl sin, cha robh an sluagh, am bitheantas, comasach air feum a dheanamh dhiubh ann an clò, agus bha am prìs trom is an t-airgead gann.

An lorg sin tha a' Ghaidhealtachd is na h-Eileanan an-diugh dh'easbhuidh searmoinean nan diadhairean fiùghail sin a chruth-atharraich gu h-ìomlan snuadh spioradail an luchd-aiteachaidh. Tha, gun amharus, dìoghlum beag againn, thall sa bhos, de an teagasgan. Thàinig mìrean blasda agus puingean cothromach thugainn air beul-aithris an t-sluaigh bho bhòrd fialaidh an t-soisgeil sin a fhrithail iad gu dùrachdach agus gu h-eudmhor.⁵⁹

(In printed Gaelic Literature only comparatively few sermons can be traced. It is not that Gaels did not esteem or value sermons, for they did, as they still do, but not all of their famous ministers were as agile in the writing of Gaelic as they were in their gift of proclamation in the language. Furthermore, the people generally were not able to derive benefit from them in print, and the price was heavy and money scarce.

As a consequence of that, the Highlands and Islands now lack the sermons of those worthy divines who transformed totally the spiritual appearance of their inhabitants. Undoubtedly, a small amount of their teachings has been gleaned, here and there. Tasty fragments and apposite points have come to us in the people's oral tradition from the generous table of that gospel that they served enthusiastically and zealously.)

ORALITY AND INSPIRATION

MacLean provides a number of interesting reasons for the absence of a rich homiletic literature in print in Scottish Gaelic, but he does place some emphasis on the paucity of a Gaelic reading public, and the lack of clerical confidence in the writing of Gaelic. It is, however, possible that the main

reason for the scarcity of indigenous Gaelic sermons in printed form was the understanding among both clergy and laity that *real* Gaelic preaching was essentially an oral art, performed and transmitted by the spoken word. Sermons, delivered spontaneously (or seemingly so) from the pulpit, were esteemed very highly in the Highlands. The sermon was the centre-piece of worship. In many parts of the Highlands and Islands, the whole experience of Gaelic worship was focused in the phrase *aig an t-searmon* (at the sermon). *An robh thu aig an t-searmon an-diugh?* (Were you at the sermon today?) was the great Sabbath-day question.

The hallmark of the greatest Gaelic preachers was indeed their capacity to deliver sermons orally without reference to paper or notes. This, of course, reflected the fundamentally important place of oral skills in the Highland context; the telling of traditional Gaelic tales was likewise an oral art – an art to which the Gaelic sermon was indebted to some extent. However, the pre-eminence of orality was, to a significant degree, increased still further when evangelical Christianity began to penetrate the Highlands and Islands. The preacher was expected to deliver a message from God, a message which was spontaneous and given to preacher and people in the power of the Holy Spirit. The use of paper, and the reading of a learned and laborious discourse, became the hallmark of the moderate (that is, non-evangelical) preacher. One of the most dismissive Gaelic terms for a poor, note-bound preacher was that he was a *ministear pàipeir* – ‘a minister of paper’. To use paper was to compromise a high spiritual calling with a low earthly standard.⁶⁰

Of course, Highland ministers were not entirely free from paper. The very existence of the Raft Swamp sermons indicates that Dougal Crawford was a highly literate man who was able to write out his material longhand in a manuscript, and he may well have done so before he delivered the sermons. As a consequence, his sermons contain features of his native Gaelic dialect, that of the island of Arran. Since they may preserve features of the preacher’s dialect which have not been levelled by complete conformity to ‘Protestant Gaelic’, printed sermons can be a very useful source of information for the Gaelic dialectologist, though this may not be appreciated by the theologian. Professor Donald MacLean pronounced a severe verdict on the published sermons of the Rev. John Macalister of Arran (1789–1845; publ. 1896): there, he claimed, ‘we have the irritating peculiarities of the dialects and idioms of Arran in unrelieved faithfulness’.⁶¹ MacLean thereby indicates that he had his own standard for the presentation of Gaelic sermons; disliking Puritan rigidity of style on the one hand, he was disinclined to admit too much of the preacher’s natural dialect on the other, particularly if that dialect belonged to the southern Hebrides (rather than MacLean’s native Lochcarron). In fact, Macalister’s sermons contain comparatively little of the Arran dialect – no more than do those of Crawford – and it would seem that MacLean was reacting against style rather than language.

Traces of the two preachers' dialects in the printed sources are a healthy indicator of the slow but steady growth of a vernacular Gaelic literature. Other ministers also were recording their sermons in written form; some made outlines of their sermons before they delivered them; others used slates, on which they wrote in chalk, and then wiped off their notes; while still others wrote outlines on paper, or even drafted full texts, which they kept long after the sermon had exhausted its pulpit life.⁶² Several manuscript collections of Gaelic sermons have survived from the eighteenth century, and the practice of writing sermons longhand was evidently fairly well established at an early period.⁶³ The most important consideration was that the preacher should not appear in the pulpit with a large and bulky manuscript, and proceed to read it to the expectant congregation. The same condition applied to English sermons too. It was not a question of language, but of inspiration.

Inspiration showed itself in ways other than spontaneity. The animation of the preacher, his body language, and the modulation of his voice were all part of the experience. We can appreciate some of the cadences of a sermon in its spoken form if we read the printed version aloud and study its phrasing, but printed sermons will never be anything more than a poor shadow of their original, orally delivered forms. The greatest defect in printed homilies is, of course, that they do not preserve any traces of the preacher's voice, his accent, or his mannerisms. It was normal for Highland preachers to project their voices by means of a heightening of pitch as the sermon progressed, as happened in Wales. This was known in Argyllshire as the minister's *duan*, 'song, tune', and in Lewis as his *sèisd* (likewise 'tune').⁶⁴

Even if they do not catch the cadences, printed sermons at least give us an outline of what the preacher said, and here we can see a considerable variety of themes and approaches. There are many sermons, particularly those preached in the northern Highlands and Islands, which are in effect theological treatises, departing little from straight exposition of the Bible text, and closely resembling the Raft Swamp sermons of 1790. Less weighty evangelical preaching, putting more emphasis on personal response and decision making, and often leaning towards the vernacular language, was more common in the Inner Hebrides than the Outer Hebrides, and more likely to be found in revivalist contexts than in the regular proclamations of Calvinist ministers. As a result of variations in themes and contexts, there is no single type of sermon which can be called characteristically 'Highland'; there are many such types. Sermons were produced to meet a wide range of contexts across the years; in addition to what we regard as the normal church setting, they were regularly preached in the open air, especially at communion services, when thousands would gather together; and others were preached by enthusiastic itinerant preachers to small congregations in cottages, in the harvest field or by the shore. Itinerant preachers were

particularly gifted in making sermons relevant to the contexts of their audiences. Themes like road building, harvesting, fishing and the burning of dead scrub, lent themselves readily to biblical illustration.⁶⁵

Sermons were preached on special occasions also, such as times of communal sorrow or rejoicing, and occasionally the printed text allows us to catch a glimpse of a frequently forgotten aspect of orality, namely audience response and participation. A particularly poignant time for preaching was in the hours prior to the departure of emigrant ships, heading for America or Australia. In a celebrated essay, '*Long Mhór nan Eilthireach*' ('The Emigrant Ship'), perhaps dating to the late 1820s, Dr Norman MacLeod (see below) provides a picture of preaching on board an emigrant ship about to set sail from Tobermory. The venerable minister – a towering authority figure in the midst of an uncertain people – goes aboard the ship, and addresses his audience. MacLeod's printed narrative catches a situation-specific style of proclamation. The emigrants, who are frightened of the voyage, answer the preacher's rhetorical question derived from Scripture: *O! sibhse air bheag creidimh, c'ar son a tha sibh fo eagal?* (O! ye of little faith, wherefore are ye afraid?):

'Tha sinn a' fàgail ar dùthcha,' fhreagair iad. 'Tha gun teagamh,' ars' esan; 'tha sibh a' fàgail an eilean 's an d' fhuair sibh 'ur togail 's ur n-àrach; gu cinnteach tha sibh a' dol air imrich fhada; cha ruigear leas a chleith gu-m bheil iomadh cruadal a' feitheamh oirbh; ach cha d' thàinig so oirbh gun fhios duibh. A' fàgail 'ur dùthcha! an dubhairt sibh; am bheil ceangal seasmhach aig mac an duine ri aon dùthaich seach dùthaich eile? Chan eil dùthaich bhunailteach againn air thalamh; cha 'n eil sinn air fad ach 'n ar n-eilthirich; agus cha-n ann 's an t-saoghal chaochlaideach so a tha e air a cheadachadh dhuinn le Dia an dachaidh sin iarraidh as nach bi imrich.'⁶⁶

('We are leaving our country,' they answered. 'You are indeed,' he said; 'you are leaving the island in which you were reared and brought up; assuredly you are going on a long voyage; there is no need to conceal the many dangers that await you; but this has not come upon you unawares. Leaving your country, did you say? Does man have a lasting link with one country rather than another? We have no fixed country on earth; all of us are mere pilgrims, and it is not in this changeable world that it is permitted for us by God to seek that home from which there will be no more journeying.')

Despite variations in context, there were certain expectations which Highland and specifically Gaelic preachers tried to satisfy, as they still do. For one thing, within the predominantly Protestant tradition, it was considered important to hold to the Scriptures and to expound them. As we have noted, the second Raft Swamp sermon of 1790 (which hints at the theme of mutability and transience among emigrants, which was also developed more ornately by Norman MacLeod) is very much in the 'heavier' evangelical

mould, and draws richly on Scripture. However, the weight of exposition was sometimes lightened by exemplum and illustration, and some ministers, like the celebrated eighteenth-century ministers Lachlan MacKenzie of Lochcarron and John Balfour of Nigg, were particularly well known for their parables and anecdotes.⁶⁷ MacKenzie's surviving Gaelic sermons show a lightness of touch and a free-flowing style which is used to convey word pictures in memorable form, as the following extract from his *Ròs o Shàron* (A Rose from Sharon) demonstrates:

Tha an lili air son a' ghàraidh, ach 's e crìoch an droighnich a losgadh. Tha sluagh Dhé anns an t-saoghal mar an lili ann am fasaich dhris agus dhroighnich, ach bithidh iad air an atharrachadh gu 'bhi air a' suidheachadh ann am Pàros shuas. 'Mheud 'sa tha na lilibhean 'san t-saoghal so bithidh iad air a' suidheachadh ann a' gàradh Dhè, far am bi iad fuidh ghathan grian na fireantachd, agus làn chothrom aca air am blàthan a sgaoileadh a mach. Cha chuir an droigheann ni 's fhaide bacadh air am fàs, oir loisgear le teine e. Ann am freasdal glic Dhè, a reir a rùn iongantach 's diomhair, tha e air cheadachadh dhoibh fàs còmhlaith air thalamh.⁶⁸

(The lily is for the garden, but the end of the thorn is to be burnt. The people of God in the world are like the lily in the wilderness of briars and thorn, but they will be changed in order to be given a place in Paradise above. As many lilies as there are in this world will be situated in God's garden, where they will be under the rays of the sun of righteousness, with a full opportunity to spread out their blossoms. The thorn will no longer inhibit their growth, for it will be burnt by fire. In the wise providence of God, according to his wonderful and mysterious will, it is permitted for them to grow together on earth.)

Some later Highland ministers, like Robert Finlayson of Lochs, in Lewis, were more 'homely' in their styles, and were experts at locating biblical events and characters in their own communities. Noah himself could become a local worthy with a boat, like all other good crofters.⁶⁹ Ministers' pithy word-pictures and illustrations tended to survive longer in popular memory than the rest of their sermons, and were frequently recounted whenever and wherever sermon-loving Highlanders assembled. Highland sermons owed much to both the Bible and traditional forms of storytelling. Tales about ministers, their sermons, and especially their illustrations, became a narrative cycle in themselves, complementing a similar body of stories about catechists.⁷⁰

Because the sermon was a central art form in the Highlands, it influenced a great deal of creativity, both oral and literary. It honed the mind and sharpened the expression of preacher and hearer alike. Preaching contributed much too to the shape of printed Gaelic prose; the earliest Gaelic periodicals were produced by ministers who were naturally inclined to homiletic styles of exposition even when dealing with everyday matters. Yet, these same

ministers were also reading English magazines and literary journals, and listening (at a respectable distance) to the traditional tales which were narrated in the cèilidh-houses of the Highlands and Islands. Their output reflects the interaction of all of these different styles.

COMPILING THE JOURNALS

Nineteenth-century clergymen compiled and edited the earliest Gaelic periodicals, and none was more important in this respect than the Rev. Dr Norman MacLeod, whose first journal, *An Teachdaire Gaelach*, spanned the two years, 1829–30. It was followed in 1840–43 by *Cuairtear nan Gleann*.⁷¹ Both periodicals attempted to provide a wide range of reading for those who had become literate through the various Gaelic Schools Societies. Diversification of Gaelic reading material was their overall aim. The journals published sermons, short stories, and moralistic and educational narratives, some of which had their roots in traditional forms of story-telling, as well as songs and more ambitious poems, sacred and secular.⁷² The range and variety of styles are impressive. Norman MacLeod himself was a skilful writer who could command several different modes. It is sometimes claimed that his writing is heavily indebted to the Gaelic Bible, but this is scarcely true; MacLeod was as much influenced by contemporary early Victorian prose in English as he was by the Gaelic Bible.

In particular, he had a remarkably keen ear for the richly idiomatic Gaelic of the nineteenth century, and sought to convey its cadences, particularly in dialogues. Dialogues were a common feature of early journals, and frequently tried to represent the spoken word of the characters. It could be claimed that, in MacLeod's dialogues, between rustic characters and omniscient catechists or schoolmasters, we are in the world of social and stylistic control.⁷³ The link with oral culture may be regarded as contrived and artificial, serving the needs of the establishment rather than reflecting the world of ordinary people. Unquestionably, there is a strong element of ponderous pomposity in such dialogues. The tone reflects the voice of the minister, rather than that of the people, but it is equally clear that the people's voice is represented, however imperfectly. So too, apparently, is the people's opinion of Gaelic sermons. In the first dialogue in *An Teachdaire Gaelach*, *Lachainn nan Ceist* (Lachlan of the Questions [i.e. Lachlan the catechist]) presents the editorial manifesto, while the second, more rustic, character, *Eòghann Brocair* (Ewen the Badger-catcher), is the bemused recipient of the 'verbal flyer' for the new journal. He reacts unenthusiastically when he hears that sermons are to be published in it:

EOGH. – Cha-n 'eil fhios agam fhéin – na-n tuiteadh dhoibh searmoinean a chur

a mach a b' urrainn daoine bochd' a thuigsinn, gun teagamh bhiodh iad feumail. Ach air mo shon fhéin, cha do thachair searmoin Ghàelic orm, ach ainneamh, ann an leabhraichean, as an tugainn mòran maith: tha 'Ghàelic tuilleadh a's domhain air mo shon, agus na smaointean air an leigeadh ris air uairibh air dhòigh nach eil mi 'g an tuigsinn.

LACH. – Thoir thusa fainear nach 'eil searmoin againn ach na dh'eadar-theangaicheadh as a' Bheurla, agus gu-m bu dùth dhoibh beagan de bhlas na Beurl' a bhi orra; ach na searmoinean ùra so, tha iad air an cur r'a chéile air tús anns a' Ghàelic, agus uaithe sin tha dòchas agam gu-m bi iad freagarrach do staid na dùthcha.⁷⁴

(EWEN – I do not know – if they should happen to issue sermons that poor people could understand, they would undoubtedly be useful. But for myself, I never came across a Gaelic sermon, but seldom, in books, from which I could derive much good: the Gaelic is too deep for me, and the thoughts expressed at times in such a way that I cannot understand them.

LACHLAN – You take note that we have no sermons other than those which have been translated from English, and that it would be natural for them to carry a little of the flavour of English; but these new sermons, they are composed in Gaelic originally, and because of that I am hopeful that they will match the condition of the country.)

When Ewen objects that it would be more sensible for people to make better use of the sermons preached orally each Sunday, and to save their money for purposes other than buying journals, Lachlan stresses the superiority of the printed sermon over the oral model, since the former, rather than the latter, can be recited intact to the family, and can accompany the rustic reader to *fasgadh an tuim* (the shelter of the hillock).⁷⁵ Quite apart from the rather bizarre picture of Gaels resting behind hillocks while reading the latest homily in the *Teachdaire Gaelach*, this appears to underestimate the memory power of Gaelic listeners, while overestimating levels of Gaelic literacy generally in the Highlands. In a manner which recalls John Carswell's strictures on Gaelic scribes in 1567, MacLeod thus promotes the perception that the non-literate Gael is missing out on a 'full' experience of the world.

It is nevertheless beyond doubt that MacLeod tried, however patronizingly, to reach the level of 'the ordinary Gael in the glen'. He strove to make 'homiletic Gaelic' more reader-friendly, and he tried to extend the range of Gaelic registers which had hitherto found their way into print. It is clear too that vernacular Gaelic is well represented in his journals, especially in his dialogues. The colourful, idiomatic, somewhat overwrought Gaelic of excited natural speech is captured well in the following excerpt from a conversation in which the participants catch sight of a well-known nineteenth-century

paddle-steamer, *Maid of Morven*, as they go out to meet her in the Sound of Mull, and set off for seasonal work in the Lowlands:

A mach ghabh sinn 'an coinneamh soitheach na smùide, a' Mhaighdean-Mhorairneach, mar a their iad rithe. Bha i 'teannadh oirnn o Mhuile, a cur nan smùid d'i. Tha i so a' tighinn, arsa Pàra Mòr, an aigeannach mhaol ghrànda, le 'gleadhraich, 's le h-ùpraid; cha b' ìoghnadh leam ach a' Mhaighdean a ràdh rithe; b' i sin a' Mhaighdean gun mhodh, gun eisimeil. Tharruing i oirnn, le caoiribh bàna fo 'sròin – a' slachdraich, agus a' sloisreadh na fairge foipe, 'bha 'g èiridh 'n a h-iomairean bàna còbhregaich a nunn gu h-Aros. Thàinig i 'nuas oirnn a' bagradh ar smàladh fo 'cuibhleachan. Fa dheireadh stad a' bhèist – 'us cha luaith' a stad na cuibhleachan o 'dhol mu 'n cuairt, na 'thug feadan fada caol, a bha suas ri taobh an t-simileir mhòir, aon ràn as a shaoil mi 'sgàineadh mo cheann. 'S ann an sin a bha 'n ùinich 's an othail 'an dol ri cliathaich na Luinge, a h-uile beul 's a' bhàta fosgailte 's an aon àm – gun urram fear d'a chéile. Ma 's i Marsali mhòr thug i mach a' Bheurla sin nach do chleachd i o 'n a bha i 'n uraidh air a' Ghalldachd; cò ach ise – bha 'Bheurla 's a' Ghaelic 'am measg a chéile. Dean fodha, ars' an dara h-aon, nach imir thu a mhic do mhàthar, ars' an t-aon eile: a stigh an ràmh bràghad shuas, buille 'g a deireadh shìos: *Cani, cani* 'illean, arsa Marsali mhòr – gu rèidh ars' a h-uile h-aon.⁷⁶

(Out we went to meet the steamship, the *Maid of Morven*, as they call her. She was drawing closer to us from Mull, going full speed. 'Here she comes', said Big Patrick, 'the horrid, bluff-bowed, spirited one, with her clamour and commotion; I'm not surprised that they had to call her the Maid; some Maid she, with no manners or decency.' She bore down upon us, with white waves under her nose – walloping and splashing the sea beneath her, which was rising in foaming, white swathes across to Aros. She came down upon us, threatening to destroy us under her paddles. At last the brute stopped – and no sooner did the paddles cease turning than a long thin whistle that was up beside the great funnel emitted a roar that I thought would split my head. What huffing and puffing there was, going alongside the ship, and every mouth in the boat open at the one time, regardless of each other. As for big Marjory, she came out with English that she hadn't used since she was in the Lowlands last year; who but she – Gaelic and English mixed together. 'Down with the oar,' said one; 'won't you row, mother's son', said another; 'ship the bow oar up there, give a stroke to her stern down there'. 'Canny, canny, lads', said big Marjory; 'take it slowly', said everyone [else].)

In this passage we can hear the vigorous, vernacular Gaelic of Morvern, MacLeod's native area, combined with the story-telling style used of monsters and sea-beasts. Traditional register is being extended to embrace the idiosyncracies of a paddle-steamer. At the same time, MacLeod gives us a glimpse of how Gaelic speech is being infiltrated by English words and phrases, as part of the cultural exchange consequent upon Highlanders' growing dependence on seasonal labour in the Lowlands, at the harvests or in the 'big

houses'. It is a picture of a changing world, captured superbly in a verbal photograph which demonstrates the critical role of the clergy not only as creators of a new social and religious order in the Highlands, but also as the chroniclers of the emerging transformation.

COLLECTING THE LORE

The clergy of the Highlands and Islands stood at the intersection of oral and literary tradition beyond the ecclesiastical sphere, and, as the preceding extract shows, they were appreciative of the rich variety of traditional creative genres attested within the communities which they served. They were, for instance, aware that prose was not the only medium for a sermon: song could be harnessed to preach evangelical messages or to inculcate higher virtues. Alexander MacFarlane, minister of Arrochar, took to the poetic air-waves in order to condemn the cattle-reiving activities of his kinsmen, and to remind them that the gibbet was one of the sure-fire ways to Hell.⁷⁷ Donald Sage's *Memorabilia Domestica* alone bears vivid witness to the daily interaction of clergymen with sacred and secular lore, and suggests strongly that, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Highland clergy inhabited a world which was much better balanced, and less affected by rejectionist dualism, than that of their post-1900 successors.⁷⁸ Although Highland churchmen after 1690 strove to eradicate secular practices which were at variance with evangelical Christianity, their worries about doctrinal purity appeared to increase from c. 1870. In the debate over allegiance to the Westminster Confession which engulfed the churches in the late nineteenth century, influential Highland minorities within the wider groupings reasserted the Puritan creeds of the seventeenth century, while the broader bodies liberalized their doctrinal positions. The more conservative groups split, at different stages, from the mainstream. As the mainstream gradually lost its identity, the smaller churches claimed the doctrinal high ground, and called for a much stronger degree of differentiation between 'the world' and 'the church'.⁷⁹

Because of this very late form of Protestant reclusiveness, it is sometimes thought that, across the centuries, evangelical clergy and schoolmasters had little interest in collecting Gaelic secular material of any kind, but this is an inaccurate picture. In fact, it seems that a schoolmaster who was closely allied to the evangelical thrust of the eighteenth-century Highland church was the first to call for the compilation of a wide-ranging Gaelic dictionary in the wake of the 'Ossianic translations' of James Macpherson.⁸⁰ This was no less a person than Dugald Buchanan (1716–68), the celebrated itinerant preacher, hymn composer and catechist stationed at Kinloch Rannoch, Perthshire.⁸¹ Buchanan urged his employers, the Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge, to compile a dictionary of 'the Terms used in Divinity'.

In so doing, argued Buchanan, they were to pay attention to the lexical riches of Gaelic poetry in the oral domain, and in 1767, while he was supervising the printing of the Gaelic New Testament in Edinburgh, he wrote to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, an eminent figure of the Scottish Enlightenment, in an attempt to enlist his support for such a project:

Some time in harvest last the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge proposed to me that while I was correcting the Galic New Testament just now in the press that I should arrange all the words in an alphabetical order as they intended to publish a small Dictionary for the use of their schools, I told them that all the words in the old as well as in the New Testament could be comprised in very little room when properly arranged and that such a Dictionary would be very defective even with respect to the Terms used in Divinity so that in my opinion they ought to add all the words in the Common prayer Book the Confession of ffaith & Catechisms with all the Galic words in Llhyd's Archaeologia Britannica and that even with all these materials before a tollerably perfect Dictionary could be made out it would be necessary that the Compiler should travel thro the Isles and western Coasts of Scotland and collect the work of the antient & modern Bards, in which alone he could find the Language in its purity. Whether the necessary expence of travelling which behoved to be very considerable deterred them from coming to any conclusion I know not but I have not heard any more of it since and imagine that this motion like many others that has been made to compose a Dictionary of this Language is crushed in the bud.⁸²

Buchanan's vision, which combines the sacred and secular, as well as the oral and literary, dimensions of Gaelic culture, is deeply concerned with the survival and reinforcement of the Gaelic language 'in its purity'. It anticipates the need to provide a range of printed tools, including dictionaries and compendia of verse. His proposal was probably too ambitious and too secular to enjoy the patronage of the SSPCK, and it doubtless scared them into silence.

Though great in scale, however, Buchanan's proposal was not entirely novel in its perceptions. Alexander MacDonald, the Jacobite poet, had published his *Vocabulary* in 1741 while still an SSPCK schoolmaster in Ardnamurchan.⁸³ The collecting of traditional songs, as well as other aspects of Gaelic lore, was also established by 1767, and churchmen had played an important part in this process. From the late seventeenth century onwards, some Highland clergymen had acted as collectors of Gaelic folklore, thus replicating to a significant extent the function of medieval monks and priests (like the dean of Lismore) as compilers of manuscripts. Robert Kirk of Aberfoyle, who produced 'Kirk's Bible' of 1690, had a scholarly interest in fairy lore.⁸⁴ Yet the spirit of 'Ossian' and the Enlightenment, which had inspired Dugald Buchanan to envisage greater things than the works of MacDonald or Kirk, appears to have had an equally beneficial effect on his clerical contemporaries.

Their response led to the compilation of manuscripts of great value, some of which, in whole or in part, reached print in later years. Major ministerial collectors of Gaelic verse in the eighteenth century included Alexander Pope of Reay, James MacLagan of Amulree and Blair Atholl, Donald MacNicol of Lismore, and Ewen MacDiarmid of Glasgow and Comrie. All four made important collections of Gaelic verse, the largest of which is that of MacLagan.⁸⁵ Ministers also wrote down the verse of key eighteenth-century Gaelic poets, who composed their songs orally and carried them in their heads. MacNicol of Lismore wrote down the verse of Duncan MacIntyre of Glenorchy from the poet's capacious memory, and the preservation of the verse of Rob Donn MacKay, of Reay, in Sutherland, was deeply indebted to clerical intermediaries.⁸⁶ Gaelic tales were written down and edited by several clergymen, among them John Gregorson Campbell, minister of Tiree from 1861.⁸⁷

Gaelic Scotland thus owes the survival of a considerable proportion of its vernacular ballads, songs and tales to the Protestant Church. Although several of these collectors were moderate clergymen, some prominent evangelical ministers are represented, among them MacDiarmid and MacNicol, and also, in the early nineteenth century, the redoubtable John MacDonald of Ferintosh, who gathered a number of Gaelic heroic ballads.⁸⁸ MacDonald was also a champion of evangelical orality, gifted with a particular power in preaching at open-air gatherings. He came to be admired as the finest Gaelic preacher of the first half of the nineteenth century, if not of the entire century.⁸⁹ Despite the popular stereotype of the world-rejecting Calvinist minister whose image tends to haunt the minds of present-day literary critics, commitment to evangelical theology did not necessarily preclude an enthusiasm for secular Gaelic literature, and particularly for the gathering of material from the oral domain. Indeed, it is worth noting that the Protestant clergy of the Scottish Highlands made a much more significant contribution to recording secular oral material than they did to writing original scholarly works of theology.

CONCLUSION: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CLERGY

I have considered aspects of the process whereby Gaelic-speaking clergymen, and literate schoolmasters too, contributed to the development of Gaelic culture at oral and literary levels, and especially at those points where orality and literacy intersected. It is no exaggeration to say that their contribution has been both central and major, and that it has covered virtually all the domains of Gaelic literary activity as we see it across the centuries. The literary input and output of the clergy have been among the mainstays of Gaelic cultural survival. We owe the literary tradition largely to the clergy. Clerical composers have contributed handsomely to enriching the variety of both prose and verse. Clerical collectors have likewise ensured that highly

important dimensions of the oral tradition of Gaelic Scotland, both sacred and secular, have been preserved in manuscript and in print. If we remove the clerical contribution from extant Gaelic literature, some two-thirds of it will vanish before our eyes.

Not only have the Highland clergy enhanced the *variety* of Gaelic literature; they have also influenced the *style* of printed Gaelic prose. As practitioners of both the pulpit and the pen, they stood at the frontier of orality and literacy. On the one side of the frontier, they operated in the domain of literacy, while, on the other, they were dependent on oral means for the communication of their message to the people. In the course of their pastoral duties, they would have used the day-to-day Gaelic of their people. Yet it could be argued that, when they first took up the pen, they allowed extraneous styles and models considerable place in their literary aspirations, and this tended to inhibit the development of natural Gaelic expression. The vernacular language, together with vernacular style, was sacrificed to some extent in order to achieve conformity with wider religious, political and literary designs. From 1567 to c. 1800, the clergy undoubtedly had a key role as translators of foundational Gaelic religious texts which were based on Genevan and (later) Westminster Calvinism, and also as the translators of the Gaelic Bible (completed in 1801). Theological study, productive of original scholarly works in Gaelic, is scarcely attested in the clerical domain; reproduction of Protestant theology and its key works was the clergy's main literary concern until the closing years of the eighteenth century.

After 1800, however, the task of translating Puritan texts (other than catechisms) became largely the responsibility of schoolmasters, who were seldom the masters of pulpit oratory. With some honourable exceptions (such as Patrick MacFarlane), they tended to perpetuate rigidity of style, producing texts which moved from one printed form to another, and hardly ventured into creative writing. As the schoolmasters devoted themselves to translation, Gaelic-speaking clergymen apparently liberalized and widened their range of interests. Those with an eye for creativity, who also happened to be placed in a context conducive to literary enterprise (usually in the Lowland cities or in the colonies), became the principal bridge-builders between orality and literacy, and also between orality and print. Pulpit oratory was traditionally and pre-eminently the domain of the clergy, and it may well have been enhanced and ennobled as an oral art by the impact of the Ossianic debate. It is certainly clear that, when ministers' original Gaelic sermons and views on style and language did reach the printing press, they brought much-needed stylistic sparkle and liveliness to a prose tradition which was all too often in danger of succumbing to the tight corsetry of external imitation. Ministers like Dougal Crawford, whose printed sermons of 1791 mark the beginning of a new homiletic era for Gaels, could not afford to lose their readers' and hearers' attention by importing foreign

styles: the emigrant communities in North Carolina would have expected 'normal' sermons. Later literary minded clergymen, consciously reacting against English models, were well aware of the need to redress the balance in favour of the spoken word. The desire to incorporate vigorous contemporary Gaelic, as spoken by the people themselves, is the rationale behind the journals of Dr Norman MacLeod in the first half of the nineteenth century. By diversifying Gaelic prose beyond doctrine and homily, MacLeod took the first significant steps to give status and independence to the voice of the Gaelic people on the printed page.

The Gaelic-speaking and Gaelic-writing clergy thus played different roles as Gaelic literacy developed. Overall, it can be said fairly that they laid the foundations on which later generations of creative writers could build. As they moved away from strict adherence to the conventions of medieval Classical Gaelic, and later of 'Westminster Gaelic', they affirmed the importance of the vernacular language, and helped to develop its power as a printed medium. Gaelic tradition as a whole, both oral and literary, thus owes the pulpiteers and clerical penmen at least a judiciously qualified debt of gratitude.

NOTES

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- 1 Huw Pryce (ed.), *Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
- 2 K. A. Steer and J. W. M. Bannerman, *Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1977); Martin MacGregor, 'Church and Culture in the Late Medieval Highlands', in James Kirk (ed.), *The Church in the Highlands* (Edinburgh: Scottish Church History Society, 1999), 1-36.
- 3 Thomas Owen Clancy and Gilbert Márkus, *Iona: the Earliest Poetry of a Celtic Monastery* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).
- 4 Kenneth Jackson, *The Gaelic Notes in the Book of Deer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).
- 5 Donald E. Meek, 'The Scots-Gaelic Scribes of Late Medieval Perthshire: an Overview of the Orthography and Contents of the Book of the Dean of Lismore', in J. D. McClure and M. R. G. Spiller (eds), *Brycht Lanternis: Essays on the Language and Literature of Medieval and Renaissance Scotland* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), 387-404.
- 6 Dòmhnall E. Meek, 'Gàidhlig is Gaylick anns na Meadhon Aoisean', in W. Gillies

- (ed.), *Gaelic and Scotland: Alba agus a' Ghàidhlig* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), 131–45, 233–5.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Meek, 'Scots–Gaelic Scribes'.
- 9 R. L. Thomson, 'The Study of Manx Gaelic', Sir John Rhys Memorial Lecture 1969, British Academy, *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 55 (1969), 177–210, esp. pp. 178–84.
- 10 R. L. Thomson (ed.), *Yn Fer-ravee Creestee* (1763) (Douglas: Yn Chesaght Ghailckagh, 1998).
- 11 T. F. O'Rahilly, *Irish Dialects Past and Present* (Dublin: Broune & Nolan, 1932), ix.
- 12 R. L. Thomson (ed.), *Foirm na n-Urrnuidheadh* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1970).
- 13 Ibid., lxxi–lxxvii.
- 14 Ibid., 3–13, 173–81 (translation).
- 15 Donald E. Meek, 'The Reformation and Gaelic Culture: Perspectives on Patronage, Language and Literature in John Carswell's Translation of the *Book of Common Order*', in James Kirk (ed), *The Church in the Highlands* (Edinburgh: Scottish Church History Society, 1998), 37–62.
- 16 Donald E. Meek, *The Scottish Highlands: the Churches and Gaelic Culture* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1996).
- 17 Donald E. Meek, 'God and Gaelic: the Highland Churches and Gaelic Cultural Identity', in Gordon McCoy and Maolcholaime Scott (eds), *Aithne na nGael* (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies and the ULTACH Trust, 2000), 28–47, at pp. 42–3.
- 18 The pattern of translating Puritan and other doctrinal texts from English into Gaelic was not unique; it is attested in the case of Manx (as in *Yn Fer-ravee Creestee*: see note 10), but more evidently in Welsh; see Geraint H. Jenkins, *Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, 1660–1730*, Studies in Welsh History, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1978), II.
- 19 R. L. Thomson (ed.), *Adtimchiol an Chreidimh: the Gaelic Version of John Calvin's Catechismus Ecclesiae Genevensis* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1962). This also contains (pp. 231–50) an edition of the Gaelic version of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. For subsequent editions of the *Shorter Catechism*, see Donald MacLean, *Typographia Scoto-Gadelica* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1915), 68–82.
- 20 *Gairm an De Mhoir don t Sluagh Neimh-iompoichte iompochadh agus bith beo*. Le Richard Baxter (Glasgow: R. and A. Foulis, 1750), iii.
- 21 John Owen, *On Communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost ...* translated into Gaelic by Alexander M'Dougall, Teacher, Glen Urquhart, with a Preface by John Kennedy, D.D., Dingwall (Edinburgh: The Religious Tract and Book Society of Scotland, 1876). Interestingly, Kennedy's Preface is in English.
- 22 Donald MacLean, *The Literature of the Scottish Gael* (Edinburgh: William Hodge & Co., 1912), 61.
- 23 Owen (trans. M'Dougall), 77.
- 24 *Cuairt an Oilthirich; no Turas A Chriosduidh; o'n t-Saoghal so chum an Ath-shaoghail fo shamhladh Brudair ...* (Edinburgh: C. Stewart, 1812). This was re-edited in later years and published in popular editions. For these editions and translations of other works by Bunyan, see MacLean, *Typographia*, 40–6.

- 25 Nigel M. de S. Cameron (ed.), *The Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), 513.
- 26 Victor Edward Durkacz, *The Decline of the Celtic Languages* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1983), 96–153.
- 27 Breandán O. Madagáin, ‘An Bíobla i nGaeilge (1600–1981)’, in M. Mac Conmara (ed.), *An Léann Eaglasta in Eirinn 1200–1900* (Baile Atha Cliath: An Clòchomhar Teo., 1971), 176–86; Deasún Breathnach, *Bedell and the Irish Version of the Old Testament* (Baile Atha Cliath: Clódhanna Teo., 1971); D. MacKinnon, *The Gaelic Bible and Psalter* (Dingwall: Ross-shire Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, 1930), 45–9; Donald E. Meek, ‘The Gaelic Bible’, in David F. Wright (ed.), *The Bible in Scottish Life and Literature* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 1988), 9–23.
- 28 MacKinnon, *Gaelic Bible*, 42–4.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 49–53.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 54–62; Durkacz, *Decline*, 66–7.
- 31 Donald E. Meek, ‘Language and Style in the Scottish Gaelic Bible (1767–1807)’, *Scottish Language*, 9 (Winter 1990), 2–16.
- 32 *Leabhraichean an t-Seann Tiomnaidh* (Edinburgh: William Smellie, 1787), II. Caib. 17:4–7.
- 33 MacKinnon, *Gaelic Bible*, 66–71.
- 34 Ian R. MacDonald, *Aberdeen and the Highland Church (1785–1900)* (Edinburgh: St Andrews Press, 2000); for Glasgow, see Ian R. MacDonald, *Glasgow’s Gaelic Churches* (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1995).
- 35 This important aspect of the emigrant experience requires to be studied in detail, but numerous works touch on it. Of particular relevance to the present chapter is Douglas F. Kelly and Caroline Switzer Kelly, *Carolina Scots: an Historical and Geographical Study of Over 100 Years of Emigration* (Dillon, SC: 1739 Publications, 1998), 99–105, at pp. 99–100.
- 36 *Searmoin a chuaidh a liobhairt aig an Raft-Swamp, air an fhichioda’ latha don cheud mhios don fhoghmhar 1790*, le D. Crauford, Minister (Fayetteville, 1791). I am deeply grateful to Mr David Williams, San Francisco, for supplying me with photocopies of this very important volume.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 28: Crawford claimed in the dedication of the second sermon that he had been getting to know the people in Carolina for seven years. Crawford was the son of David Crawford, farmer, Sisgan, Kilmorie, Arran. He was educated at Glasgow University, and licensed by the Presbytery of Dunoon on 27 March 1781. He was ordained on 3 October 1781 by the Presbytery of Edinburgh as deputy chaplain of a regiment in Dutch Service in America. He was assistant at Kilmorie in 1795, and was successively minister at Saddell, Kintyre (1779–1815) and at Kilmorie (1815–21). He was accidentally drowned on 22 March 1821 while going out to a small boat, about a mile from Pladda Island. See Huw Scott *et al.* (eds), *Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticanæ* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1866–), IV. 63, 65. Rev. Dr T. M. Murchison notes (in the Gaelic Supplement of *Life and Work*, March 1966, 5) that Crawford became the minister of Barbecue (or Barbeque) Presbyterian church, Olivia, NC, about 1784.
- 38 Duane Meyer, *The Highland Scots of North Carolina 1732–1776* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1957); Kelly and Kelly, *Carolina Scots*.
- 39 *Searmoin ... aig an Raft-Swamp*, 5. The separate dedications suggest strongly that the sermons were originally intended to be published as two separate booklets, but the existing text shows the consecutive page numbering of a single

- volume. *Searmoin* on the existing title page is probably a singular (feminine) noun, and not a plural. It is possible that the printer/publisher decided at a late stage that it was economically more prudent to issue the sermons as one book.
- 40 Ibid., 38.
- 41 Kelly and Kelly, *Carolina Scots*, 100, 168.
- 42 *Searmoin ... aig an Raft-Swamp*, 9.
- 43 Ibid., 34.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 *Leabhraichean an t-Seann Tiomnaidh* (Edinburgh: William Smellie, 1786), IV.
- 46 It is not clear how or where Crawford learned to write Gaelic.
- 47 I am not aware that earlier handwritten drafts of these sermons have survived. A close textual analysis (which I intend to undertake as part of a forthcoming full edition of the sermons) may reveal post-delivery 'insertions'.
- 48 The printing of prayers was a bold step in the Gaelic evangelical context. The length of the prayers appears to correspond to normal conventions in the Highlands.
- 49 *Searmoin do Mhnai' chuaidh a sgrìobhadh ann sa Bhliadhna 1795*, le D. Crauford (Glasgow: James Gillies, 1795).
- 50 MacLean, *Literature*, 28.
- 51 This was printed by John Moir, Edinburgh.
- 52 *An Saighidear Criosduidh*, 10.
- 53 *Searmona le Mr Eobhann MacDiarmid, Minister ann an Glascho, agus na dheigh sin, an Comrie* (Edinburgh: C. Stewart, 1804). MacDiarmid was the minister of the Ingram Street Gaelic chapel; see MacDonald, *Glasgow's Gaelic Churches*, 9.
- 54 Derick S. Thomson (ed.), *The MacDiarmid MS Anthology* (Edinburgh: Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1992).
- 55 MacLean, *Literature*, 35.
- 56 I have examined copies of MacDiarmid's book which were the treasured possessions of owners in both Canada and Scotland. The copy used for this chapter was extensively annotated by a theologically alert and 'involved' reader.
- 57 MacDiarmid, *Searmona*, 120–1.
- 58 Calum MacLeòid, *An Iuchair Oir: Searmoinean* (Stirling: Stirling Tract Enterprise, 1950).
- 59 Domhnall MacGilleathain (ed.), *Dòrlach Sil: Searmoinean Le Caochla Mhinistearan* (Edinburgh: Free Church Publications, 1931), 5.
- 60 This is a well-acknowledged perspective in the Gaelic areas, and can be confirmed readily by consulting any minister who uses Gaelic as a regular preaching medium.
- 61 MacLean, *Literature*, 61. J. Kennedy Cameron (ed.), *Gaelic and English Sermons of the Late Rev. John Macalister* (Inverness: Northern Counties Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd, 1896).
- 62 This material affords useful material for future explorations of ministerial literacy in Gaelic.
- 63 See, for example, John Macdonald, 'The Rev. John MacKay's Gaelic Sermons', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, Part 2 (March 1962), 176–202; Kenneth MacDonald, 'Prose, religious (eighteenth century)', in D. S. Thomson (ed.), *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 241–2.
- 64 Personal knowledge.

- 65 Donald E. Meek, 'Evangelical Missionaries in the Early Nineteenth-century Highlands', *Scottish Studies*, 28 (1987), 1–34, at p. 12.
- 66 A. Clerk (ed.), *Caraid nan Gaidheal: A Choice Selection of Gaelic Writings by Norman MacLeod* (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1910), 263–73, at pp. 269–70.
- 67 John MacInnes, *The Evangelical Movement in the Highlands of Scotland, 1688–1800* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1951), 69–78.
- 68 'Ros o Sharon': *Searmoin leis an Urr. Lachlann Mac Coinnich a bha ann an Lochcarron* (Glasgow: Archibald Sinclair, n.d.), 10.
- 69 Roderick MacLeod, 'The John Bunyan of the Highlands: the Life and Work of the Rev. Robert Finlayson (1793–1861)', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 54 (1984–86), 240–68.
- 70 Tale-swapping of this kind continues to the present.
- 71 Clerk, *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, xxxi–xxxiii.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Sheila Kidd, 'Social Control and Social Criticism: the nineteenth-century *còmhradh*', *Scottish Gaelic Studies*, 20 (2000), 67–87.
- 74 Clerk, *Caraid nan Gaidheal*, 11.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 Ibid., 385–6. The paddle-steamer, *Maid of Morven*, was acquired by Robert Napier in 1827; see C. L. D. Duckworth and G. E. Langmuir, *West Highland Steamers* (Glasgow: Brown, Son & Ferguson, 1987), 4.
- 77 Sean Dain, *agus Orain Ghaidhealach* (Perth: John Gillies, 1786), 132–3; Michael Newton, *Bho Chluaidh gu Calasraid* (Stornoway: Acair, 1999), 260–3.
- 78 Donald Sage, *Memorabilia Domestica* (Wick: W. Rae, 1889), 1–49.
- 79 Meek, *Scottish Highlands*; Meek, 'God and Gaelic'.
- 80 Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988).
- 81 *The Spiritual Songs of Dugald Buchanan*, Donald MacLean, ed. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1913), vii–xii, provides the 'traditional' outline of Buchanan's life. This requires substantial modification; I am currently at work on a new Gaelic edition of Buchanan's verse and a reassessment (to be published in English) of his life and work in their eighteenth-century context.
- 82 SRO GD 18/4529. I am very grateful to Dr Donald William Stewart, Department of Celtic, University of Edinburgh, who is assisting me in the Buchanan project (see note 81), for bringing this document to my attention; and also to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, Bt, for giving me permission to reproduce the letter in print. Edward Lhuyd (1660–1709), who is mentioned in the letter, made a grand tour of the Celtic countries in 1697–1701. He assembled material of archaeological, historical and linguistic significance; see Derick Thomson and John Lorne Campbell, *Edward Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963).
- 83 Ronald Black, *Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair: the Ardnamurchan Years* (Coll: Society for West Highland and Island Historical Research, 1986), 24–30.
- 84 Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* (Edinburgh, 1815). The work was completed in 1691.
- 85 For MacDiarmid, see note 52 above. For the other collectors, see Thomson, *Companion*, 177, 188, 240, under individual names.
- 86 Ibid., 188, 250.
- 87 Cameron, *Dictionary*, 129.

The spoken word

88 John Kennedy, *The Apostle of the North* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1978), 22–4.

89 *Ibid.*, passim.